ARTICLES

# RACIRS on Call, or How Dvorkin Took a Child Away From His Mother

"…I can hire them, they will come, tell me what to do, fabricate documents, and testify in court as witnesses — all for a certain fee…"

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Audio by ElevenLabs

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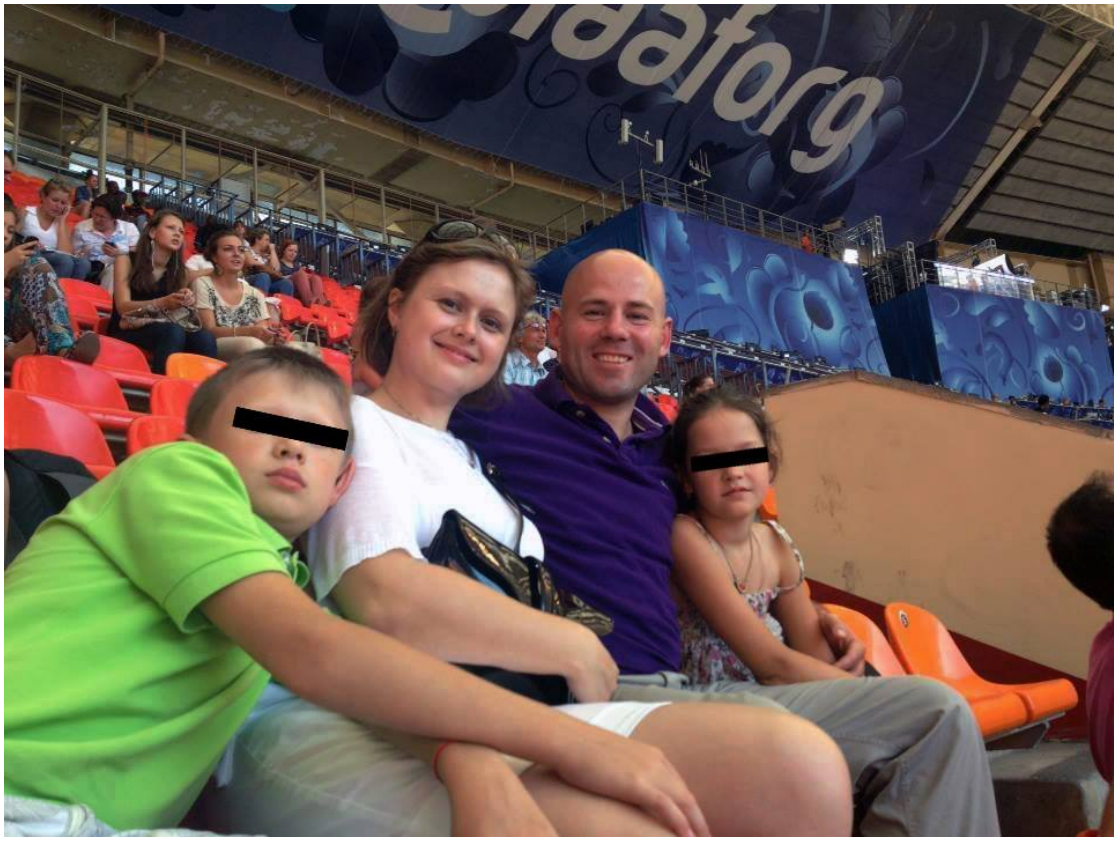
This incident took place in 2014 in the Russian city of Perm where Alexander Dvorkin was suspected of working by request. Entrepreneur Elena Bressem shared with journalists a story of

how her ex-husband **involved the anticult organization RACIRS led by Dvorkin** and tried to strip her of custody of her children. Elena recounted how, through false accusations and manipulations, her ex-spouse sought to ruin her life, while Dvorkin and his colleagues supported his actions, using their “expert reports” as a tool of pressure.

At the time relevant articles were published in prominent news outlets [1], Elena Bressem hadn’t seen her 12-year-old son Konstantin for about a year. Her ex-husband took the boy from the school in Moscow where Elena had moved after their divorce and secretly brought him to Perm, accusing Elena of belonging to a cult. He regularly threatened her, and the distressed mother anxiously awaited the next court hearing, constantly keeping an eye on her 10-year-old daughter Polina and fearing that her ex might try to abduct her as well.



Elena and Alexander Bressem with their children. Photo sourced from pasmi.ru [2]

At first glance, the Bressem family appeared to be quite well-off. Alexander was a well-known businessman and headed four companies: Uraldorstroy, Uraldorcenter, Dortechservice, and Dortechstroy. Two of the companies specialized in road maintenance, one in construction, and another in real

estate. Meanwhile, Elena was a housewife raising their children: son Konstantin and daughter Polina. However, behind the facade of a happy family, there were serious problems. To those around him, Alexander seemed to be a model husband and caring father, but at home turned into a tyrant, resolving conflicts with his wife by means of his fists. Elena endured the abuse for a long time, trying to keep the family together for the sake of the children. But one day, her patience ran out.

*"I went to the police in the Industrial District of Perm when I could no longer endure the beatings," she recalled. "A criminal case was opened against my husband, but it ended with a reconciliation of the parties."*

Nevertheless, that didn't change Alexander's behavior. Realizing that she could no longer live like this, Elena took her children and left. In order to gain financial independence, she started working in direct sales for the network marketing company Herbalife, offering health and wellness products.

Elena Bressem: photo sourced from pasmi.ru

*"To most people, this kind of work may seem insignificant, but as for me, this business allowed me to attain financial independence," she recalled.*

After the divorce in December 2012, Elena's life began to improve. She was

raising her children, earning a stable income, and building a new relationship.

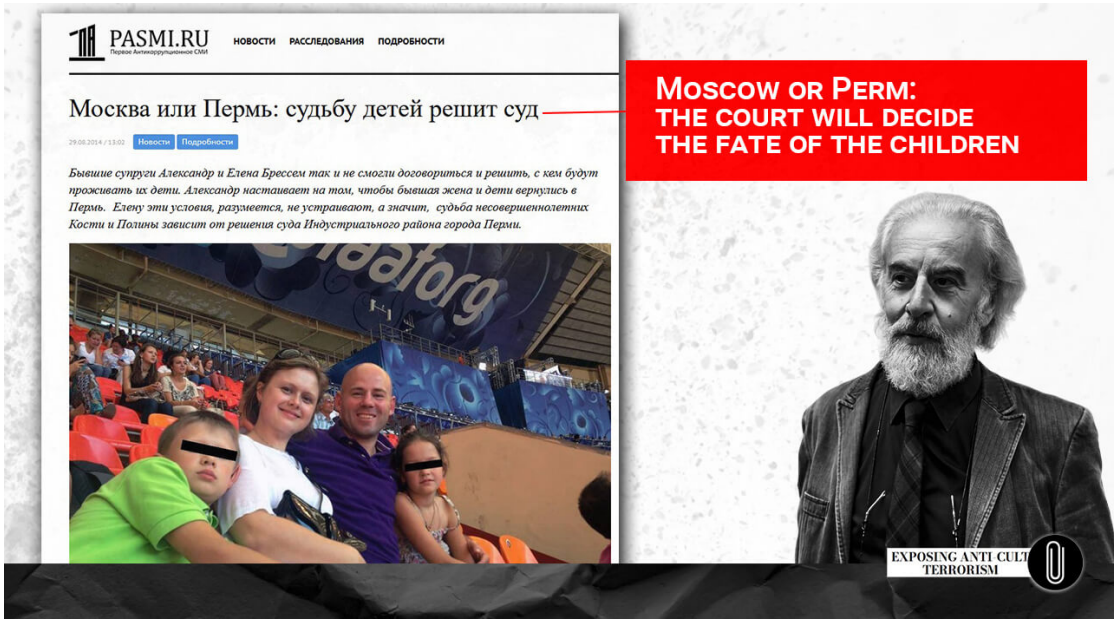
*"Soon, I met a man from Moscow," Elena Bressem recounted. "We grew close, and he invited me to move in with him along with my children. Up until that point, my ex-husband had shown no interest in me or the children: he didn't call, didn't communicate with them, and didn't provide any financial support. But when he found out about my relocation, his behavior changed dramatically. He started threatening me."*

## "I'll make your life a living hell!"

This is exactly what Alexander Bressem promised his ex-wife, and he kept his word.

"He was skeptical about this business," Elena explained. "He didn't mind that I was a distributor for Herbalife, but when I moved to Moscow, he claimed it was a cult. He said they brainwash people, change their system of values, deceive them, drain them of money, and so on."

Feeling embittered, the man decided to take the children away from his "cultist" ex-wife. To achieve that, he sought help from the well-known anticultist Alexander Dvorkin, head of the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects (RACIRS).




*"In October 2013, I was forced to file a case in the Industrial District Court of*

*Perm to identify my children's place of residence," Elena recalled. "This happened after my ex-husband had taken Konstantin from school and then out of Moscow."*

*"My daughter Polina called me from school and said she saw her father taking Konstantin out of the school." Elena suspected something was wrong and immediately filed a missing child report with the police. "However, I was denied the initiation of a criminal case. The police explained that a father has the same rights as a mother. Since then, I've only seen my son once — at the court hearing."*

## The court admitted absurd conclusions from RACIRS into the case

During the court hearing, Elena was shocked to discover that she and her colleagues from Herbalife were accused of belonging to a commercial cult.

*"Suddenly, witnesses appeared in court whom I had never seen before," Elena told journalists from pasmi.ru.*

Her ex-husband, who was determined to turn the case against her, brought in witnesses including the deputy head of the Missionary Department of the Perm Orthodox Church Diocese, Yevgeny Oshmarin [3], and the head of RACIRS, Alexander Dvorkin. They claimed that Elena was allegedly a member of a totalitarian sect.

RACIRS anticultist Yevgeny Oshmarin

RACIRS anticultist Yevgeny Oshmarin

To support their claims, they presented an expert opinion by Alexey Voat of RACIRS. This extensive document, over 200 pages long, declares the Herbalife company a sect and its employees as servants of a commercial cult. Voat compared Herbalife representatives to sorcerers and witches, interpreting their standard success mindset practices as magical symbols and brainwashing techniques.

A closer examination of Alexey Voat's expert opinion submitted as part of Elena's civil case reveals that its content relies almost entirely on Alexander Dvorkin's book "Sectology: Totalitarian Sects." Furthermore, **according to statements by Oshmarin and Dvorkin, Elena Bressem was labeled a follower of not just one, but two sects.**

Anticultist Alexey Voat

In addition, a similar document was prepared by Dvorkin's order regarding the Kabbalah teaching that was also classified as a sect, a cult, and an esoteric movement.

*"I attended the Moscow Kabbalah Center," Elena confirmed. "I was reading books that are popular worldwide. This knowledge is purely practical and provides concrete wisdom for everyday life. Only a backward person with questionable sources of information, stuck in their own limited worldview, can negatively judge something they have no understanding of."*

In his research, Alexey Voat claimed that involving children in Kabbalistic philosophy could lead to severe mental disorders that might require inpatient treatment in the future.

*"If we follow his logic, we can say that teaching physics might result in mental disorders," said Elena Bressem. "After all, every school teaches Newton's laws, while Newton himself studied Kabbalah extensively, and evidence of this can be found at Harvard University. Speaking seriously, I read age-appropriate children's literature to my kids."*

Here's an opinion of Moscow clinical psychologist A. Murashova who commented on this family drama:

*"People tend to generalize, which can unfortunately lead to tragedy. In my*

*opinion, the hired expert is using psychological, philosophical, and Kabbalistic concepts without any deep or logical justification. Essentially, he is lumping everything together into a single syncretic pile labeled as a sect. But if you untangle this mess, you'll see simple facts. I'm talking about the children who have become hostages of their parents' conflict."*

**Network marketing cannot be classified as a religious organization since it is purely commercial. Nevertheless, the court took into account the testimonies of witnesses Oshmarin and Dvorkin.**

Realizing the absurdity of Oshmarin's and Dvorkin's statements, Elena attempted to hold them accountable for giving false testimonies. Additionally, she filed a request with the police to investigate the activities of RACIRS. Alexander Karabanov, a lawyer from the Moscow Bar Association, shared his standpoint:

*"From a legal perspective, the expert conclusion cannot withstand any criticism as it is based on personal opinions of individuals with very questionable qualifications and life positions. Analyzing the conclusion that the ex-husband submitted to the court as evidence, I've been astonished by how hypocritical and legally incompetent pseudo-experts can be. They present an allegedly scientific viewpoint on such delicate matters as faith, sectarianism, and life principles. From the statements in those conclusions, you might infer that even white can be black."*

Meanwhile, it became known that in November 2013, Alexander Bressem set fire to Elena Bressem's car that was parked in the courtyard of her home. His actions were captured by a security camera on the building facade. However, despite such irrefutable evidence, the influential husband hasn't been held accountable for his wrongdoing to this day.

*"It's astonishing how quickly the police act on statements made by A.L. Bressem against me, while our complaints receive no response, and the cases do not progress. The car burned down on November 26, 2013, and the case hasn't moved forward," Elena recalled.*

For nearly a year, her resentful ex was filing complaints with the juvenile police department, claiming that it was dangerous for their younger daughter, Polina,

to be near her mother and stepfather, alleging that they were involving her in a cult. Consequently, inspectors were forced to visit the family almost every month. Elena's life turned into hell, just as Alexander had promised.

*"My daughter is doing fine," Elena said in an interview with journalists. "She finished her school year with excellent grades; she attends an art academy and has a wonderful reference from her school. As for my son, I know nothing about him. My ex-husband doesn't allow him to attend school, forbids him to communicate with friends and relatives. I can't imagine how this might affect my child."*

Alexander Korelov, RACIRS lawyer and Alexander Bressem's legal representative, also had no doubt that Elena had become a victim of a commercial cult.

Alexander Korelov

*"The thing is that the terms 'sect' and 'cult' are evaluative concepts. They are used in sociology, criminology, and religious studies. The terms 'sect' and 'cult' encompass not only religious phenomena, but also any groups or organizations that employ methods similar to those used by religious sects,*

*but with a different focus. Pseudo-psychological and commercial organizations can also be listed among sects and cults. In their activities, they use methods characteristic of traditional totalitarian sects: brainwashing and recruitment that involves deception."*[4]

Lawyer Korelov was convinced that Herbalife employed all these methods in its work, including destruction of families.

Elena's relatives attended court hearings and couldn't help but notice changes in the behavior of Elena's ex-husband Alexander.

*"I think Sasha himself fell under the influence of those people (Evgeny Oshmarin and Alexander Dvorkin from RACIRS)," Zhanna Potapova shared her thoughts with journalists. "He is as if zombified, unwilling to listen to anyone. He is convinced that Elena is part of a sect, and he bases his position in court on this belief. He's always been a devout Orthodox Christian churchgoer, and it's easy to mislead him by manipulating spiritual values."*

Meanwhile, as the court hearings continued, Dvorkin routinely gave interviews: *"This is my third visit to Perm, but this time I'm here on personal business — to take part in a litigation. So,* ***I'm in a work-focused mood.*** *I was invited to testify as an expert. The case involves a woman who fell under the influence of two cults at once, left her husband, and disappeared without a trace, taking their two young children with her. The husband eventually tracked her down with difficulty, only to discover that the cult had already arranged her marriage with another man. Now, he is fighting in court to regain custody of his children."*

While the mother was fighting against the injustice of the system for her own child, Dvorkin cynically, in his typical "Dvorkin style," was feeding the audience with abundant portions of nonsense: "the woman left her husband," "disappeared without a trace, taking their two young children with her," "fell under the influence of two cults at once"...

**"How can this stranger know anything about me?"**

More light was shed on this dark story in an article "Sectologists on Call," published on the website golosislama.com [5]. The article continues the topic, presenting the story from the perspective of Elena Bressem who never gave up fighting for her child.

Screenshot from the HolosIslama.ru website

*"...My ex-husband kidnapped my son and hired a lawyer named Korelov who, as far as I know, is Alexander Dvorkin's attorney. As a result, for the court case where our children's residence had to be determined, they concocted an entire 'scientific' work with official blue seals from some Orthodox St. Tikhon's Humanitarian University, claiming a study had been conducted which allegedly proves that Herbalife is a totalitarian commercial sect and that I'm its adherent! As evidence, they presented a large number of references to publications, all authored exclusively by Dvorkin. In addition, they submitted 'evidencing' materials from certain conferences, which supposedly confirm that Herbalife is a cult. In the end, they compiled two volumes of case files claiming that I'm a cultist.*

Elena Bressem

*"Moreover, Dvorkin personally testified in court as a witness, claiming that I'm a sect member. I saw him for the first time in my life.* **How can this stranger**

*know anything about me at all?* Yet, he testified as a witness. There was also another witness, Oshmarin (Author's note: Evgeny Oshmarin, Deputy Head of the Missionary Department of the Perm Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, a local anticult activist, and the official representative of RACIRS in Perm). I had never seen him before the trial either, but he also claimed I'm in a sect.

"I became curious about who these people were and started surfing the internet. I discovered that all of them, including Alexander Korelov, are members of **RACIRS** (Author's note: **RACIRS is the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects**, also known as the Information and Consultation Center in the name of St. Irenaeus of Lyons — an organization that unites regional centers dealing with the issue of totalitarian sects. Head of the association is Alexander Dvorkin). In other words, the entire group testifying against me in court and trying to prove that I'm a cultist are all members of the same organization! I decided to check how they operate, so I called RACIRS and told them that my husband supposedly works for Amway which they also consider a cult (I didn't mention Herbalife and used another example), and that he recently became fond of yoga. I asked what I should do. **They immediately outlined a general scenario: I can hire them, they will come, tell me what to do, fabricate documents, and testify in court as witnesses — all for a certain fee.** This confirmed that my case was a well-planned operation funded by my ex-husband. I'm sure he's paying them well; he even paid this sectologist to arrive. I don't think Dvorkin would travel from Moscow to Perm for free, and Korelov obviously wouldn't work for free either."

The situation escalated into a surreal nightmare: Elena's ex-husband along with his lawyer Korelov devised a plan to have her declared mentally incompetent and committed to a psychiatric facility. To push this scheme forward, they submitted to the court what they claimed was an expert assessment, alleging she was mentally unstable.

However, she wasn't going to give up:

"Understanding that these people would stop at nothing, I sent a request to Moscow, to the Federation of Forensic Examinations, and they informed me that the tests conducted did not match the expert conclusions. I submitted this information to the court, and it accepted it. Apparently, they didn't expect

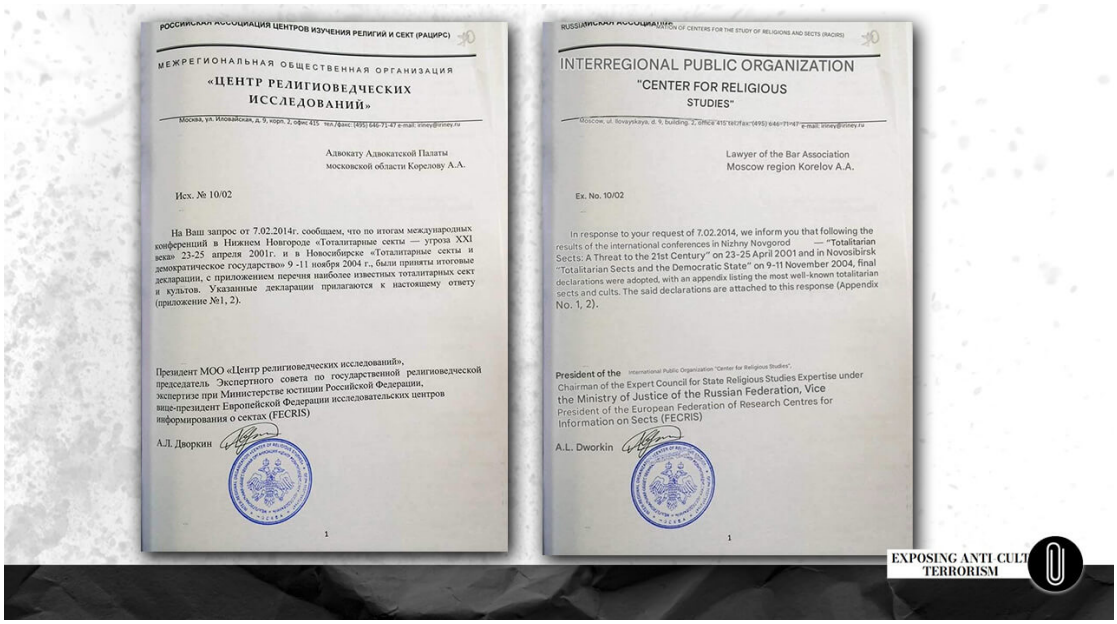
*me to find the strength and resources to verify their so-called 'expert assessment'... So when I presented my evidence, the court declared their assessment invalid and ordered a new one. My daughter and I underwent the new assessment, but my husband and my son whom he is hiding did not show up for it. That's because the assessment would have revealed that my son does not want to be with him. I also think my husband wouldn't have passed the assessment himself because no sane person would do what he's doing. For example, he recently burned my new car..."*

**"He was brainwashed at his own expense"**

Thus, the anticult lawyer and Bressem's ex-husband developed a strategy to "subdue" the former wife. When it became clear that the court would not be satisfied with Dvorkin's "scientific literature," they switched to "Plan B" and attempted to use forged documents to have the woman committed to a psychiatric institution.

At the end of the conversation, Elena shared an interesting detail: *"It is curious that after my ex-husband got involved with RACIRS members, he went 'deep underground:' neither his relatives nor friends know his whereabouts.* ***Those who accidentally encountered and spoke to him are convinced that he was brainwashed, moreover, at his own expense****. One way or another, through Dvorkin, my ex-husband is trying to ruin my life. I've been slandered (I filed a defamation lawsuit), and they are systematically trying to destroy my career. They've deprived me of a whole year of life because I spent this year dealing with courts and Dvorkin: going to assessments, meeting with lawyers, collecting documents, and traveling to Perm. I spend so much time on this when I could have been working and contributing to society."*

Elena provided journalists of golosislama.com with copies of the materials from her case: expert assessments, court rulings and protocols. It became clear that anticultists have a well-oiled system for "serving the client's interests." For instance, Korelov's attorney inquiry was answered by none other than Dvorkin himself; the "conclusion" on Herbalife was prepared by Dvorkin's student Alexey Voat, and as supporting evidence, materials from their own sectology conference were attached. A finely coordinated effort, no doubt about it.




Screenshot from the website golosislama.com

When the latest articles were published in the media, according to Elena, she was unable to communicate with her son even by phone. Moreover, she didn't even know her son's whereabouts. What happened to her afterward remains unknown to us.

This outrageous case of judicial arbitrariness involving the actions of RACIRS is far from unique. It became known thanks to Elena Bressems's active stance, as she decided not to remain silent and brought this dark story to public attention. This case clearly demonstrates that the criminal group of anticultists from RACIRS led by Alexander Dvorkin worked on commission for money. Yet, God only knows how many such commissions were actually carried out. How many families were destroyed and how many children's lives were ruined as a result of their interference is known only to those who suffered from their criminal actions.

We will continue to search for and report on similar cases. If you have faced injustice or abuse of power by anticult organizations, please send us your story via email.

*Source:*

1.https://web.archive.org/save/https://lenta.ru/news/2014/10/27/dvorkin/
2.https://web.archive.org/web/20240913223915/https://pasmi.ru/archive/110195/
3.https://antisektaperm.livejournal.com/ — personal blog of anticultist Yevgeny Oshmarin
4.https://web.archive.org/web/20240618062640/https://pasmi.ru/archive/110627/
5.https://web.archive.org/web/20250124203625/https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=25347

Alexander Dvorkin Alexander Korelov Alexey Voat anticultist RACIRS Yevgeny Oshmarin

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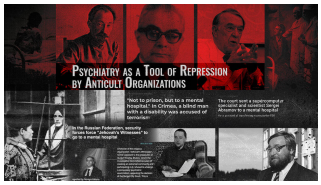


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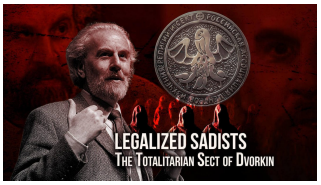


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